

2015 Mar-12 AM 09:21
U.S. DISTRICT COURT
N.D. OF ALABAMA**Proposed Consent Order**
Tom and Melissa Thompson

to: [REDACTED]

03/10/2015 04:58 PM

From: "Tom and Melissa Thompson" [REDACTED]

To: [REDACTED]

History: This message has been forwarded.

Judge Haikala –

I am writing to you in support of the Proposed Consent Order between Huntsville City Schools and the U.S. Department of Justice. My son [REDACTED] is a 10th grade student at New Century Technology High School. He attended school at Hampton Cove Elementary and Hampton Cove Middle Schools and was zoned for Huntsville High School. Our family chose the New Century magnet school as the best choice for [REDACTED] because of its emphasis on the STEM fields and because of the unique offerings within the computer and engineering strands.

One of the parts of the Proposed Consent Order that does not get enough attention, in my opinion, is the addition of the math acceleration component and the addition of Math Teams at all middle and high schools within Huntsville City Schools. Our son has participated in Math Teams since 3rd grade, and that activity has proven to be highly-beneficial to him in not only developing his math skills but also broadening his horizons as he looks to college. As a direct result of his participation in Math Team, our son is getting college solicitations from Ivy League schools and other notable universities across the country. Although every parent believes their child is "special," we recognize that his natural talent would only have taken him so far; we believe that the opportunities that he has to go to selective colleges is a direct result of the successes that he's experienced through Math Team.

Because we have experienced first-hand the benefits of a strong Math Team program and of the pathways that flow from an accelerated math curriculum, we believe that every student in Huntsville City Schools should have those same opportunities.

There is a great deal of emphasis on the STEM fields right now, and for good reason. Study after study shows an impending critical shortage of workers in the science, technology, engineering, and math fields that is a threat to not only our national security but to our national economy as well. Therefore, to provide students with the skills to be successful in math is to provide them the opportunity for a successful and in-demand career beyond high school.

The most notable thing about math education is not even the math itself . . . it is the problem-solving skills that results from taking something that is known and applying it in a new context. Richard Rusczyk, founder of the national Art of Problem Solving math forum, has noted, "Problem solving is crucial in mathematics education because it transcends mathematics. By developing problem solving skills, we learn not only how to tackle math problems, but also how to logically work our way through any problems we may face. The memorizer can only solve problems he has encountered already, but the problem solver can solve problems she's never seen before."

When we give students the opportunity and the tools to become problem solvers through Math Team participation and through a rigorous math curriculum, we open the world to them. Therefore, I would

encourage you to accept the Proposed Consent Order and, in so doing, to give new and/or expanded opportunities to all of the students in Huntsville City Schools.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter,

Melissa Thompson